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## Design Principles For Attracting Older Learners

### Student Dissertation

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## SAT: Design Principles For Attracting Older Learners (Caroline Ward)

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[carrie ward](#)

16 January 2019

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Title of Multimedia Presentation

**“Design Principles for attracting and engaging older learners for creating a Mooc; Introduction to studying local history through photographs”**

Author **Caroline Ward,**

Type of project;

**Inclusion, older learners, Design Principles for attracting and engaging older learners, for use when creating a Mooc.**

### Abstract

What are design principles? Why is it essential to consider design principles for each separate group of learners?

This multimedia presentation aimed at students of Open University H818 course, introduces design principles and illustrates through an account of the research into design principles for attracting and engaging older learners interested in local history, why it is necessary to identify relevant principles for each group of learners. The relevance of Keller ARCS model and Mace's Design Principles for Learning for designing an online course for older learners is also discussed. The presentation concludes with recommendations of relevant design principles for older learners. A video accompanies the presentation at; <https://vimeo.com/308444451>

### Rationale

The topic chosen for this research was motivated by curiosity into what were the needs of older learners, especially the needs of older learners interested in local history. Additional reasons were realising many older individuals have an interest in local history and family

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history for reasons of “wanting to belong and connect to their local community” Brown Wilson (2013) and frequently need guidance on where to start research. Unfortunately, their needs are no longer being met, due to the abolition of local history courses. This raises a number of issues. What are the needs of older learners? Do older learners study MOOC’s? What are the needs of amateur historians? Can a MOOC meet these unmet needs? Do Moocs already exist on this topic? How do you design an online course? Consequently, research was undertaken into design principles for attracting older learners to an online course.

Little research has investigated whether older learners study using Moocs and which subjects they wish to study. However, this project successfully identified a study by Llyangunawardena, (2017) into use of Moocs, which confirmed older learners make up a significant proportion of learners and that they study topics that are of general interest, eg Climate Change. Research by DeLaHaye(2008) also confirmed that older learners are motivated to learn for reasons of personal growth.

However, older learners do face additional barriers to learning. Research by Githens (2007),DelaHaye (2008) Willans & Seary (2011), suggest that older learners can be affected by role conflict, lower self-confidence, poorer eyesight, poorer hearing, decreasing working memory leading to slower learning, which course design must address.

Primary research was then used to investigate the needs of amateur local historians. Local archive staff were interviewed and a questionnaire survey was administered to members of a local history group. This research revealed local history enquiries were about the history of local streets, buildings and also family history, and were made by individuals aged 30+ but predominantly by over 60s. Simultaneously additional research established that there were only a few online courses being offered nationally meeting the needs of novice local historians.

(506 words)

### Selective References;

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Llyangunawardena, (2017) Elderly learners and MOOCs :a review. Interactive Journal of Medical Res. 5(1)

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Safford K. (2016) Barriers to blended digital distance vocational learning for non traditional students. British Journal of Educational Technology, 47 (1) p 135-50

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Willans J & Seary,K (2011) I feel like I 'm being hit from all directions. Australian J of Adult Learning 5(1) p. 119-142.

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Discussion (4)

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[Munir Moosa Sadruddin](#)

12:56pm 19 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hi Congratulations on choosing an interesting topic! Such an enrich topic of connectivity to local history! I am interested to learn about the target population and have you conducted a survey to learn about the needs of older learners and whether they study MOOC or not? You rightly identified that older people face barriers and they need motivation, guidance and need to identify their needs!

Munir



[Munir Moosa Sadruddin](#)

10:03am 20 January 2019 (Edited 10:24am 20 January 2019) [Permalink](#)

Hi

I am very much interested to learn about the design principle as many older people in Pakistan are socially isolated. They also want to learn but need a platform. I think your presentation will also help me to think for older people in Pakistan as the ageing

population is growing everywhere and we really need to provide them education platform.

What theme have you chosen? Innovation, inclusion or implementation? I think its inclusion but just need to confirm

Munir



[Vicky Hindle](#)

8:42pm 14 February 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hello Caroline,

Looking forward to this presentation. There is a lot of research on pedagogy and androgogy (theories of teaching adult learners) but these theories do not always take into account the needs of older learners. I am assuming the age range you are refering to is 65 plus?



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

5:01pm 18 February 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hi Carrie

Well done on a great presentation! Here is a summary of the comments and questions you received following your presentation (including those you may have addressed verbally). Please respond in whatever way you choose - I suspect you may wish to deal with the first few in one response!

Best wishes

Simon

- ▶ I imagine that online learning can help older people to feel less isolated.
- ▶ I did some research on Mature students, and found that they were more committed to their learning (they know what they want to learn and why) and they have fewer distractions of the type that would impact on their focus on learning.
- ▶ <https://www.iso.org/news/2001/12/Ref809.html> The document provides guidance for writers of International Standards as well as users of standards - manufacturers, designers, service providers and educators - on how the needs of older persons and people with disabilities can be taken into account in standards under development.
- ▶ Very interesting re older learners being a significant cohort of MOOCs esp on FutureLearn. One reason for lack of attention to this cohort is that these learners may be less inclined to buy certificates which is the business model for MOOC platforms
- ▶ I've designed FutureLearn MOOCs and also participated in MOOCs. Activities are designed to be universally accessible. Personally I find online learning to be a great 'leveller' - I have no idea how old we all are here for example but we unite

over common interest. Very interesting topic.

- U3A had a local history of group and I believe there were a number of local history groups? Sorry, online courses not groups
- Did you look at other platforms, such as OpenLearn, that allow learners to move at their own pace?
- My mother has just set up her Echo and is raving about Alexa. Could voice be a useful way of engaging older learners?
- A very useful model and completely agree with the concepts and absolutely small steps are crucial to this particular cohort.
- Asynchronous nature of MOOCs enables working at own pace - also helpful as no-one can see you trying to find the right buttons!
- Is there a need to further segment these older learners. There are some still in work who have great digital literacy skills and are really into IT and those who don't?
- How do the design principles differ between older and younger learners?
- Do older learner find it difficult to find courses?
- Older learners can mentor younger learners on their courses
- Have you considered facebook groups?
- to help people find courses and each other?
- Why design the MOOC just for older learners - why not make it inclusive?

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